



***Querimonia desolacionis terre sancte* – The fall of Acre and the Holy Land in 1291 as an emotional element in the Tradition of Teutonic Order**

***Querimonia desolacionis terre sancte* – A perda de Acre e da Terra Santa em 1291 como um elemento emocional para a tradição da Ordem Teutônica**

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Resumo: A queda de Acre sob o poder das forças muçulmanas em 1291 foi um dos mais devastadores eventos na história do Reino Latino de Jerusalém. A queda da principal cidade das cruzadas, de fato a capital do Reino Latino, foi o último episódio na longa história da resistência das cruzadas na Terra Santa. A queda de Acre teve influência decisiva na população cristã, na Igreja e na nobreza em toda a Europa. Também gerou um grande impacto nas Ordens Militares, afetando suas capacidades e força. Este artigo irá analisar uma das principais ordens militares na Terra Santa – a Ordem Teutônica, e a maneira como a queda da Terra Santa influenciou a tomada de poder de sua tradição. As principais crônicas sobre a Ordem Teutônica, escritas na primeira metade do século XIV por seus inspiradores Peter Von Dusburg e Nicolaus Von Jeroschin mostram isso claramente. Este evento crítico em que os cavaleiros teutônicos também participaram é tido como um evento central. Apesar do tempo decorrido desde a queda do Reino Latino e a longa distância da batalha teutônica na região dos Bálcãs, este evento crucial na Terra Santa se tornou um símbolo tido como um lamento (*klage* em alemão). Este lamento representou um profundíssimo sentido de dor causado pela grande perda e sofrimentos associados com a queda da Terra Santa. Este artigo acentuará ainda mais a afirmação de que mesmo entre os membros da Ordem Teutônica dentro das margens do cristianismo na região dos Bálcãs, bem separada da atividade cristã na Bacia do Mediterrâneo, a queda da Terra Santa foi fundamental. Isso dominou o estado emotivo em que a Ordem Teutônica, afetando e se envolvendo nas tradições. Tendo se tornado os meios por que a O. T. expressou solidariedade para com a dor causada pela perda da Terra Santa, o lugar onde suas tradições começaram e onde foi forjada sua herança medieval.

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Abstract: The fall of Acre to the Muslim forces in 1291 was one of the devastated events in the history of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. The fall of main Crusader city in fact the capitol of the Latin Kingdom, was the last military episode in long history of the Crusader resistance in the Holy Land. The fall of Acre had a decisive influence on the Christian population, the Church and the nobility throughout Europe. It created also a forceful impact on the Military Orders, affecting their capability and strength. This article will focus on one of the main Military Orders in the Holy Land - the Teutonic Order, and on the manner in which the fall of the Holy Land had influenced the empowering of its tradition. Major chronicles of the Teutonic Order, written in the first half of the fourteenth century by its brethren Peter von Dusburg and Nicolaus von Jeroschin show it clearly. This critical event in which the Teutonic Knights also participated is treated as a central event. Despite the time that elapsed from the fall of the Latin Kingdom and the long distance from the Teutonic fighting in the Baltic region, this crucial event in the Holy Land had become a symbol destined as a lament (Klage in German). This lament represented an emotional and sense of pain caused by the great loss the suffering associated with the fall of the Holy Land. This article will further accentuate the assertion that even among the members of the Teutonic Order within the borders of Christianity in the Baltic region, well separated from Christian activity in the Mediterranean basin, the fall of the Holy Land had been fundamental. It had dominated the emotional state in the Teutonic order, affecting its evolving traditions. It had become the means through which the Teutonic Order had expressed solidarity with the pain caused by the loss of the Holy Land, the place where their traditions began and was further shaped their medieval heritage.

Palavras-chave: Terra Santa – Cruzadas – Reino Latino de Jerusalém – Queda de Acre – Ordem dos Cavaleiros Teutônicos.

Keywords: Holy Land – Crusades – Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem – Fall of Acre 1291 –Teutonic Order.

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One of the crucial events in the history of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem is the fall of Acre to the Mamluks in 1291. The loss of Acre was the final note in the long decline of the Latin Kingdom during the second half of the 13th century. In the 1260s and early 1270s many Crusader strongholds fell into



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Mamluk hands, including some of the main sites such as Nazareth, Caesarea, Arsor, Jaffa and the Montfort castle. This left Acre and its immediate vicinity as a Crusader enclave in the heart of Muslim territory.²

The fall of Acre had a significant impact on the Crusaders in the Latin East and Europe, who would have preferred to keep the Crusader outpost in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean.³ This was particularly true for members of the Military Orders, who had devoted their military and economic capabilities to the Latin Kingdom.⁴

Those Military Orders – the Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights, along with other Military Orders, had shed their blood across the Latin Kingdom and suffered many casualties in the final siege which took place in Acre between March and May 1291. The Military Orders had to protect the city walls as well as its main strongholds, and fought bravely against the Mamluk invaders after the latter broke into the city on May 18th, 1291. The Military Orders' survivors were then pushed into the city's port and the

² RICHARD, Jean. *The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, vol. II B. Amsterdam: North Holland Pub., 1979, p. 393-397; LITTLE, Donald. P. The Fall of 'Akkā in 690/1291: The Muslim Version, SHARON, Moshe (ed.), *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization, in Honor of Professor David Ayalon*. Leiden: Brill, 1986, p. 159-181; SCHEIN, Sylvia. Babylon and Jerusalem: The Fall of Acre 1291-1995, MURRAY, Alan. V (ed.), *From Clermont to Jerusalem, The Crusades and Crusader Societies 1095-1500*. Selected Proceedings of International Medieval Congress University of Leeds 10-13 July 1995. Turnhout: Brepols, 1998, p. 141-150.

³ *Excidiū Aconis Gestorum Collectio. Magister Thadeus Civis Neapolitanus, Ystoria de Desolatione et Concolatione Civitatis Aconensis et Tocivis Terre Sancte, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 202, ed. HUYGENS, Robert. B. C. with contributions by FOREY, Alan and NICOLLE, David. C. Turnhout: Brepols, 2004; *Cronaca del Templare di Tiro (1243-1314), la caduta degli stati crociati nel racconto di un testimone oculare*, ed. MINERVINI, Laura. Napoli: Liguori, 2000, no. 253-272 (489-508), p. 206-226; STICKEL, Erwin. *Der Fall von Akkon*. Untersuchungen zum Abklingen des Kreuzzugsgedankens am ende des 13. Jahrhunderts. Bern and Frankfurt: Herbert Lang, 1975.

⁴ PRAWER, Joshua. Military Orders and Crusader Politics in the Second half of the XIIIth Century, FLECKENSTEIN, Josef and HELLMANN, Manfred (eds.), *Die geistlichen Ritterorden Europas*, Vorträge und Vorschungen 26. Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1980, p. 217-221; FOREY, Alan. *The Military Orders, From the Twelfth to the Early Fourteenth Centuries*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992, p. 204-220; NICHOLSON, Helen. J. *Templars, Hospitallers, and Teutonic Knights: Images of the Military Orders, 1128-1291*. Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1995, p. 43-50.



Templar compound in the southern part of the city.⁵ The Templars protected the northern part of the city and during the break into the city their Grand Master, William of Beaujew, was killed.⁶ The Hospitallers also defended the northern part of the city, and their Grand Master, John of Villiers, was severely wounded in battle. He escaped with the remainders of the Hospitalers to Cyprus, describing in his urgent letter to the Grand Prior of the Hospitallers in southern France the fate of the city and its dramatic fall to the Mamluks. This description was one of the first pieces of information sent to the West about the loss of the Latin Kingdom and the Christian strongholds in the Latin East.⁷

The other Military Order, the Teutonic Order, protected the northeast area of the city, close to their compound. This area was at the heart of the battle, the place where the break into the city had actually taken place, near the Accursed Tower. Most of the Teutonic Knights were killed during the Mamluk assault while protecting their compound and its surroundings.⁸ Among the fatalities was also the leader of the Teutonic Order at the time, Heinrich von Bolanden, who was called urgently from the Teutonic outpost in Sicily to support the

⁵ RUNCIMAN, Steven. *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954, p. 417-423; TYERMAN, Christopher. *God's War, A New History of the Crusades*. London: Belknap Press, 2006, p. 820-822.

⁶ *Cronaca del Templare di Tiro*, no. 262 (498), p. 216-218 [as n. 2]; BARBER, Malcolm. *The New Knighthood, A History of the Order of the Temple*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 176-178.

⁷ DELAVILLE LE ROULX, Joseph. *Cartulaire général de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem (1100-1310)*, vol. 3. Paris: E. Leroux, 1899, No. 4157 (1291), p. 592-593; KING, Edwin. J. *The Knights Hospitallers in the Holy Land*. London: Methuen, 1931, p. 301-302; RILEY-SMITH, Jonathan. *The Knights of St. John in Jerusalem and Cyprus 1050-1310*. London: Macmillan, 1967, p. 195-197; DURLING, Nancy. V. The Destruction D'Acre and its Epistolary Prologue (BNF FR. 24430), *Viator* 42.1 (2011), p. 139-142.

⁸ *Excidii Aconis Gestorum Collectio* [as no. 3], p. 61-69; FORSTREUTER, Kurt. *Der Deutsche Orden am Mittelmeer*, Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens [QSGDO] 2. Bonn: Verlag Wissenschaftliches Archiv, 1967, p. 50-53; MILITZER, Klaus. *Von Akkon zur Marienburg, Verfassung, Verwaltung und Sozialstruktur des Deutschen Ordens 1190-1309*, QSGDO 56. Marburg: Elwert, 1999, p. 45-46; MORTON, Nicholas. E. *The Teutonic Knights in the Holy Land 1190-1291*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009, p. 142-143; BOAS, Adrian. J. *Archaeology of the Military Orders. A Survey of the Urban Centers, Rural Settlement and Castles of the Military Orders in the Latin East (c.1120-1291)*. London: Routledge, 2006, p. 61-63.



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members of the Order in the city and to organize the defense during the preparations for the fight against the Mamluk soldiers.⁹

The few members of the Military Orders that survived this fierce battle and the fall of the city, fled in their ships to the Crusader stronghold on the island of Cyprus.¹⁰ Consequently the Teutonic Order established its new headquarters in Venice, which then operated as a central base for the Teutonic Knights. It served as a point of contact between the Teutonic strongholds in the Mediterranean and its bases in northern Europe, beyond the Alps.¹¹

The fall of Acre is described and discussed in medieval sources and in Christian literature across Europe. The Pope and the Church institutions in Europe made immediate plans to restore the Latin Kingdom back to Christianity, similarly to their actions following the defeat in the Battle of Hattin in 1187 and the establishment of the Kingdom following the Third Crusade in 1190.¹²

Organizing a crusade to re-conquer the Holy Land was unsuccessful in terms of mobilizing European leaders, nobles and warriors. It seems that the European fighting spirit had waned and with the fall of Crusader strongholds in the Latin East there was not much hope for a re-conquest. These processes

⁹ STERNS, Indrikis. *The Teutonic Knights in the Crusader States, A History of the Crusades*, Vol. V, ZACOUR, Norman. P and HAZARD, Harry. W (eds.). Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985, p. 377; MILITZER, Klaus. From the Holy Land to Prussia: The Teutonic Knights between Emperors and Popes and their Policies until 1309, SARNOWSKY, Juergen (ed.), *Mendicants, Military Orders, and Regionalism in Medieval Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, p. 79; TOOMASPOEG, Kristjan. *Les Teutoniques en Sicile (1197-1492)*. Rome: Ecole Francaise de Rome, 2003, p. 65-68, 133, 139.

¹⁰ FAVREAU-LILIE, Marie-Louise. The Military Orders and the Escape of the Christian Population from the Holy Land in 1291, *Journal of Medieval History* 19 (1993), p. 201-227.

¹¹ ARNOLD, Udo. Akkon-Venedig-Marienburg. Der Deutsche Orden vom Mittelmeer zum Ostseeraum, Tommasi, Francesco (ed.), *Acri 1291, La Fine della Presenza degli ordini militari in Terra Santa e I nuovi orientamenti nel XIV secolo*. Perugia: Quattroemme, 1996, p. 69-74.

¹² EDBURY, Peter. W. *The Conquest of Jerusalem and the Third Crusade*, sources in translation. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996, p. 53. 82-83, 162-163; KEDAR, Benjamin. Z. Ein Hilferuf aus Jerusalem vom September 1187, *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 38.1 (1982), p. 116-117; SCHEIN, Sylvia. 'The Terrible News': The Reaction of Christendom to the Fall of Jerusalem (1187), *Gateway to the Heavenly City: Crusader Jerusalem and the Catholic West (1099-1187)*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005, p. 159-160.



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also continued in the first decades of the 14th century, and ended due to criticism over the manner in which the Crusaders in the Holy Land acted towards their Muslim enemies.¹³

Unlike the Templars and Hospitallers, the Teutonic Order had established its main stronghold away from the observant eye of Church institutions in Central Europe. The Military Order chose to strengthen its hold on the edges of the Baltic region in Prussia and Livonia (present day Latvia and Estonia). In these areas the Teutonic Order had gained military and political success with the complete conquest of Prussia and the displacement of the heathen tribes.¹⁴

In 1309, the Teutonic Order moved its headquarters from Venice to Marienburg in the heart of Prussia. It seems that this move put an end to the Teutonic willingness to participate in struggles and hostilities in the Mediterranean basin aimed at restoring the Holy Land to Christian hands. The Mediterranean region then became marginal in Teutonic policy. Their strongholds on the island of Cyprus, Greece and southern Italy were deserted, and were no longer treated as outposts of northern Europe, the Baltic region and Germany.¹⁵

Despite this, the Holy Land remained of religious and spiritual importance to the Christian world and was not forgotten, even when being rather marginal

¹³ LEOPOLD, Antony. *How to Recover the Holy Land*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1972, p. 173-174; SCHEIN, Sylvia. *Fideles Crucis, The Papacy, the West, and the Recovery of the Holy Land 1291-1314*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, p. 101-110; FOREY, Alan. The Military Orders in the Crusading Proposals of the Late-Thirteenth and Early-Fourteenth Centuries, *Traditio* 36 (1980), p. 317-345.

¹⁴ JOHNSON, Edgar. N. The German Crusade on the Baltic, HAZARD, Harry. W. (ed.), *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. III. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975, p. 569-571, 576-577; CHRISTIANSEN, Eric. *The Northern Crusades*. London: Macmillan, 1980, p. 77-78; HOUSLEY, Norman (ed.), *Documents on the Later Crusades, 1274-1580*. London: Macmillan, 1996, p. 54-55; Mažeika, Rasa. Granting Power to Enemy: Gods in the Chronicles of the Baltic Crusades, ABULAFIA, David and BEREND, Nora (eds.), *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002, p. 153.

¹⁵ FAVREAU-LILIE, Marie-Louise. L'Ordine Teutonico in Terrasanta (1198-1291), HOUBEN, Hubert (ed.), *L'Ordine Teutonico nel Mediterraneo, Atti del Convegno internazionale di Torre Aemanna*, (Cerignola)- Mesagne – Lecce 16-18 ottobre 2003 (Acta Theutonica 1). Galatina: M. Congedo, 2004, p. 67-69. HOUBEN, Hubert. Die Landkomture der Deutschordenballei Apulien (1225-1474), *Sacra Militia, Revista di Storia degli Ordini militari* 2 (2004), p. 127-129, 139-140.



in Teutonic tradition. In the most important Teutonic chronicle, *Chronicon Terrae Prussiae*, written in 1326 by Peter von Dusburg, one of the cleric members of the Order, Acre was mentioned several times.¹⁶ Von Duisburg described the preparation in 1290 for the fighting in Acre and celebrated the arrival of the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order – Burchard von Schwanden, who led a group of 40 knights along with 400 German warriors to help the city's defense and maintain the main Teutonic stronghold in the Latin Kingdom.

The author gave information about the surprising resignation of the Grand Master a few days after his arrival and his abandonment of the city to serve as a Hospitaller member in the Order's command post in Switzerland.¹⁷

Above all, Peter von Dusburg provided us with a unique and emotional description of the fall of Acre and the Holy Land, emotions which were evident throughout the Christian world. This unique description which opens with the Latin words 'Querimonia desolacionis terre sancte' – a lament, describes the longing for the Holy Land. This was the Promised Land which was lost and fell into the hands of the Muslims who destroyed its fortifications and caused terrible damage to its Christian population.¹⁸

¹⁶ SCHOLZ, Klaus and WOJTECKI, Dieter (trans.), *Peter von Dusburg Chronik des Preussenlandes*, *Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters* 25. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984, p. 38-40, 508-510 [*Peter von Dusburg Chronik*]

¹⁷ *Cronaca del Templare di Tiro*, no. 249 (485), p. 204 [as n. 2] ; *Peter von Dusburg Chronik* [as n. 16], Chron. IV, p. 504: "Frater Burgardus de Swanden magister generalis IX ordinis domus Theutonice prefuit hoc tempore. Hic nescio, quo ductus spiritu, dum ad terre sancta defensionem debuit transire, petita licencia et obtenta habitum ordinis Theutonice deposuit et ordinem Hospitalariorum assumpsit, in quo postea est defunctus"; MILITZER, Klaus. Burchard von Schwanden, ARNOLD, Udo (ed.), *Die Hochmeister des Deutschen Ordens 1190-1194*, QSGDO 40. Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1998, p. 40-41.

¹⁸ *Peter von Dusburg Chronik* [as n. 16], Chron. IV, p. 516: 'Sic ergo tu, o sancta terra promissionis Deo amabilis et angelis sanctis venerabilis et universo mundo admirabilis a Deo electa et preelecta, ut te presencia sua visibiliter illustraret et in te liberationis nostre sacramenta ministrando genus humanum redimeret, posita es desolata et merore consumpta. Factus est Dominus inimicus, precipitavit omnia menia tua, dissipavit munitiones tuas, dissipavit quasi ortum tentorium tuum, demolitus est tabernaculum tuum, oblivioni tradidit festivitates et sabbatum, abiecit in opprobrium in indignacione furoris regem et sacerdotem'. For this account see: *Peter von Dusburg Chronik* [as n. 16], Chron. IV, p. 508: 'Anno Domini MCCXC in ie Potenciane virginis, scilicet XIII kalendas Iunii, civitas Achonensis a soldano destructa est captis et occisis Cristianis infinitis'.



This lament was also mentioned in the Chronicle of Nicolaus von Jeroschin, written in German in the mid 14th century, whose purpose was to translate Peter von Duisburg's Latin chronicle into German, a more prevalent language among the members of the Teutonic Order. The account includes the lament about the fall of Acre and the entire Holy Land as well as some additional remarks.¹⁹ In my opinion, this was also aimed at reinforcing the ties of the Teutonic Order to the Holy Land at the end of the Crusader period.

The use of emotional appeal directed at the members of the Teutonic Order and the description of the dramatic fall of the Holy Land into the hands of the enemies of Christianity, continued after the fall of the Holy Land in 1291. In 1300 Peter von Dusburg described several hostile events in the east between the Mamluks and the Mongols, with Christian assistance. According to von Dusburg, the battle took place in northern Syria near the border of Armenia. The Mamluks were defeated and fled south to the Egyptian border near Gaza, far removed from the battlefield in northern Syria. This description greatly exaggerated the number of victims among the Mamluks, quoting it as 300,000.²⁰

There is no doubt that Peter von Dusburg was aware of attempts to restore the Holy Land into Christianity as well as other battles and skirmishes which took place in this region, but it seems that due to the great distance between the Mediterranean basin and the Baltic region, where he resided, these descriptions were accompanied by exaggerations and emotion.

It is possible to surmise that von Dusburg's goal was to strengthen the relationship between the members of the Teutonic Order posted in the Baltic region and their heritage in the Holy Land. He described the importance of

¹⁹ FISCHER, Mary. *The Chronicle of Prussia by Nicolaus von Jeroschin*. A History of the Teutonic Knights in Prussia, 1190-1331. Farnham: Ashgate, 2010, p. 206-207.

²⁰ *Peter von Dusburg Chronik* [as n. 16], Chron. IV, p. 520 (1300): 'Anno Domini MCCC Tartari exeuntes a sedibus suis invaserunt Sarracenos et primo in Capadocia, deinde in partibus Seleucie sive Antiochie, inde in Armenia maiori et minori, abinde in tota terra promessionis et in Damasco et in Gaza usque ad confinia Egipti, in quibus omnibus regionibus plus quam CC milia Sarracenorum occiderunt'; THORAU, Peter. *The Lion of Egypt: Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century*. London: Longman, 1987, p. 174-175; SCHEIN, Sylvia. Gesta Dei per Mongolos 1300, The genesis of a non-event, *English Historical Review* 94 (1979), p. 810-811.



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the Holy Land to Christianity and to the Teutonic Order which fought for its survival in the late 12th century and during the 13th century.

Above all, this is expressed in the lament on the fall of the Holy Land and Christian strongholds which von Duisburg described with much emotion, including the suffering caused by the loss of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and the end of this period in the medieval era.